



May 9, 2012

David J. Lewis  
Cooperative Extension, Marin County  
1682 Novato Blvd., Suite 150B  
Novato, CA 94947

Dear Mr. Lewis:

On behalf of the American Farmland Trust, I am pleased to submit this letter of support for the North Bay Food Systems Advisor (NBFS) position. This is an important new position that we believe would contribute to growing a healthy agricultural infrastructure in the North Bay counties of Marin, Napa, Sonoma, and Mendocino. We feel this position is important because it would support the economic viability of agriculture which is not only key to protecting our food supply but also critical for conserving farmland.

We see this position as a crucial step toward overcoming many of the challenges that we outlined in our 2010 white paper, *Sustaining our Bounty: an assessment of the current state of farming and ranching in the San Francisco Bay Area*. In this we identified key challenges facing our region's agricultural as:

- High cost of farmland and competition with rural estates
- The need to balance the water needs of urban and agricultural users, as well as water for wildlife
- Inadequate regional food distribution system infrastructure
- Inadequate processing facilities
- Inadequate financing for all of the above

Through the work of the Cooperative Extension of Marin we have seen many innovative and strategic approaches to addressing agricultural production needs, gaining public support for the region's producers, and working with local leaders on efficient regulatory processes for agricultural projects. With the formation of the North Coast Regional Food Systems Network, we see great potential for cooperatively addressing many of the challenges outlined above. Approval of funding for the North Bay Food Systems Advisor (NBFS) position would greatly capture this existing momentum and expand the reach and depth of support that is necessary to sustain the economic viability of the region's farmers and ranchers.

I support the Cooperative Extension of Marin and its partners to pursue the creation of this new position.

Sincerely,

Edward Thompson, Jr.  
California Director, American Farmland Trust